

## The



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**THE NEW NORMAL SCHOOL****The First Session Opened Last Monday Morning.****The First Normal School in New Mexico Opens Under the Most Auspicious Circumstances.**

Last Monday morning about fifty of the citizens of Silver City assembled at the Presbyterian church to witness the opening exercises of the new normal school. About forty of the pupils who will attend the school were in attendance at 10 o'clock, the hour fixed for the opening exercises. They were seated in the main audience room of the church while the visitors were accommodated with seats in the wing.

Mayor Fleming presided and at a few minutes after ten he arose and announced that the exercises would be opened with prayer by Rev. Fitch. After prayer there was music. Mrs. Shelby played the piano and eight or ten young ladies sang.

Mayor Fleming then introduced Hon. W. G. Ritch, a member of the board of regents of the normal school, who spoke in part as follows:

Mr. President and Fellow Citizens: Education, as known to the American public school system, has been mainly the outgrowth of the century in which we live. It is a creation that was made possible under freedom as known to our government; was indeed made an essential because of its being necessary to an intelligent and stable government, of the people, by and for the people.

Prior to this century, education was almost exclusively the business of the church. It was largely confined to the priests and monks and representatives of the religious orders. They stood at the head of the great educational institutions of the world of that period, and assumed that it was the sole and exclusive business of the church to educate, influence and control mankind. The facilities were limited and expensive and learning was confined to the wealthy few.

Such was the marked condition in Europe at the date of the settlement of the American continent, and of the founding of the great republic.

New Mexico, with the rest of Spanish America, inherited whatever educational resources she also possessed, until quite

recently, from the educational systems and methods brought to the country by the Franciscan and Dominican friars.

At the date of the American occupation in 1846, or thereabouts, there were a few church schools in the territory, of which those of Vicar Martinez at Taos and Father Leyva at San Miguel, are still kindly remembered by the older Mexican population.

Subsequently came the Christian brothers, the sisters of Loretta and the sisters of mercy, under whom a considerable number of schools were established in the territory. There were likewise established from time to time during the earlier days of American occupancy, English schools, at Santa Fe, Taos, Las Vegas, Tiptonville, Laguna and elsewhere variously under Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists. Subsequently came the Congregationalists, with academic schools at Santa Fe, Las Vegas and Albuquerque.

The first attempt to establish American public schools by law, supported by direct taxation, was in 1873. A few schools were started under the law, but owing to the small amount of money available, but little was accomplished. Some of the schools located in English speaking localities were more or less assisted by private subscription, and thus maintained a precarious existence.

In 1876 a carefully prepared school bill, with liberal financial provisions, was introduced in the legislative assembly of that year, which passed the council 9 to 4 but was defeated in the house 12 to 10, two members not voting, who would have voted for the bill, if by so doing their votes would have secured the passage of the bill. The bill was non-sectarian in character and encountered the active hostility of the Jesuits.

A similar fate overtook similar school bills introduced in 1878 and 1880 respectively.

In the meantime, it is worthy of note that Silver City secured the enactment of a law authorizing an independent school district, with authority to levy a sufficient tax for its support; and thus was established, in this city, the first American public school that could command a sufficiency of public money for its maintenance.

It was not until 1884, after railroads had crossed and recrossed the territory and brought new blood and new people,

and public sentiment became educated up to the public school idea, that a general law was enacted worthy of the name, and under which the school system of the territory took on anything like a satisfactory character and proportions. This law has since been amended and revised and during the past few years the territory has come to the front with a school system that compares favorably with the country at large.

One of the great drawbacks has been the want of competent teachers versed in modern methods.

Thus, having given you a brief history of education and of public schools as known to New Mexico, we come to the act of the 30th legislative assembly, which became a law Feb. 11, 1893, making modest appropriations and authorizing the establishment of two normal schools; one at Las Vegas and one here at Silver City, and in honor of which we are assembled today, to give formal emphasis to the opening of the first normal school to be established in the territory. I trust, that Monday, the third day of September, 1894 will mark the beginning of an era in the rise and progress of the normal school and by parity of reasoning the public schools of the territory, which will result in their becoming equal to the best on the continent.

Of the splendid site and campus of the normal school donated by Silver City, the letting of the contract for the erection of the school building and the selection of the faculty, by the board of regents, you are all more or less familiar.

The thanks of the regents are due, and on their behalf I make this the occasion for expressing public acknowledgements to the Presbyterian society of this church, for their kindly and generous tender of the use of this building rent free, and which has enabled the board to open and maintain the normal school from the beginning of the school year.

Of the necessity for the normal school, it goes without saying, when we consider for a moment the fact that the old states such as Massachusetts, New York and Ohio, not to mention Indiana, Wisconsin and Kansas, have each among many others long since, established the normal school as a prime necessity at an expense of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and all of which has since been